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ABSTRACT

Unified Studies, an example of holistic education in practice, is an integrated curriculum designed to address students' talents that are ignored by traditional education, which has been operating for 15 years. This report describes in detail participants' experiences and perceptions of the program, which operates as a university/high school partnership. The ethnographic methodology included participant observation; interviews with teachers, administrators, and students; and document analysis. Participants' viewpoints are presented in samples of field notes made by the researcher, teachers and student teachers, and students. Findings indicate that students, as active participants, have learned values and how to set priorities for their lives. Gaining real experience in problem solving has contributed to increased self-esteem and initiative-taking. The program's focus on real experiences expands students' learning by addressing their aesthetic, moral, physical, and spiritual needs. Finally, both teacher and students learn in such a program. (LMI)

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A Naturalistic Study of Unified Studies, a Holistic High School Program[1]

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Objective

Unified Studies, a program that has been operating for 15 years, provides an excellent example of holistic education in practice. The primary objective of this presentation is to examine in some detail from their multiple perspectives, the lived experiences of the participants in this example of an integrated curriculum, designed to address many of the students' "talents" traditional education programs ignore.

Perspective

In a recent editorial, Ron Miller (1989) provides a succinct definition of holistic education as a "philosophy of life" that has at least these four characteristics:

1. "seeks to nurture the development of the whole person,"
2. "involves a new relationship between teacher and student" that replaces authoritarian practices with "dialogue, cooperation, friendship, and respect,"
3. "is a spiritual worldview rather than a materialist one," and
4. "is, at least implicitly, a critical perspective on modern culture" and opposes the "competitive, hierarchical, violent, materialistic, and hedonistic tendencies of the contemporary Western worldview."

In a larger treatment of the idea of a holistic curriculum, John Miller (1988) contrasts three "curriculum positions" which are rooted in different worldviews "that can be linked to various philosophical, psychological, and social contexts. . . transmission, transaction, and transformation." He argues throughout the book for the transformation position which is holistic and includes the other two to oppose the fragmentation of life into meaningless parts. He notes, "It can be argued that schooling contributes to atomization and alienation. We divide our curriculum into subjects, then the

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subjects into units which, in many cases, are not related to each other. Commissions focus primarily on student achievement, parent groups cry out for the basics, and academics argue for thinking skills. Yet the teacher must face the whole child who can never be limited by our categories or priorities. Ultimately, we must engage the child in all her richness rather than reduce her to our own preconceptions. Education, then, has played its role in contributing to the fragmentation of modern life."

A search of the literature on holistic education produced a few brief descriptions of operational programs that seem to fit these definitions. But indepth analyses of established programs were not found. Such a description and analysis of an exemplary holistic program is presented here. Unified Studies is an interdisciplinary program that has been promoting a holistic approach for juniors and seniors in high school for fifteen years. Students must apply to be part of the program and the teachers select a cross-section of the student population, from "at-risk" to "advance placement" students so students will have opportunities to learn from people who are different than them. The focus is on life-long learning in all areas of life (though they have to focus officially on the areas in which students are earning credits for participating in the year-long class which meets every other day, all day: science, social studies, fine arts, English, and recreation).

As the Unified Studies teachers state in their course disclosure document: "The goal has been first to discover and then to design an educational experience that would have a positive, significant impact on the life-styles of students. The end result is a program that emphasizes the joy of learning. Unified Studies is an integrated educational program involving all activities associated with the natural environment. The environment is our curriculum. Real learning must be an active process; consequently, we learn by doing. Real learning occurs more consistently and rapidly when the student is dealing with real objects, real problems, real situations, rather than contrived problems. Integral relationships develop as a result of this comprehensive approach between the student and her peers, the student and the teacher, the student and his environment."

Methods

The method of inquiry was naturalistic or ethnographic with ongoing qualitative analysis. This mode of inquiry was determined to be the most appropriate for an indepth examination of the processes used by these teachers in their social, political, and intellectual context to create, expand, and continue this program for such a long period of time. The researcher (author) was a professor of education at a large university who participated with the staff of a moderately large high school to create a partner or "key" (Goodlad, 1984) school as part of a larger partnership between the university and five independent school districts. Given this quasi-~~investigator~~ insider role, the researcher spent 2-3 days per week in the school for most of two school years (plus 4-5 days per month for five months of another school

year). He spent the majority of that time with the two Unified Studies teachers and their students but had many opportunities to observe and interview students, teachers, and administrators throughout the school. He also worked with 13 student teachers during this time, introducing formal naturalistic inquiry principles to them, the teachers and many of the students.

Fieldnotes containing observations, interview transcripts, document analyses, audit trail indices, interim analyses, and reflections of the researcher were maintained throughout the project. Computer programs (SONAR) designed to aid in the analysis of qualitative data were used in conjunction with domain, taxonomic, componential, and theme analysis techniques described by Spradley (1980). Criteria outlined in Lincoln and Guba (1985) and by Williams (1986) were followed to ensure the credibility and utility of the inquiry (these included prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, thick description, and maintenance of an audit trail).

Data Sources

Data sources for this inquiry included students, teachers, student teachers, and administrators at a relatively large (about 1700 students) high school in the Southwestern United States. The researcher participated in the daily learning activities which took place both on and off campus and helped teach a few units on social science research to enhance the quality of his participant-observer role. Everyone knew he was a professor at a university; but after participating in all their activities for a few months, students treated him much as they treated their teachers and student teachers. He was able to conduct many informal interviews during the process of observation. He also reviewed the students' files containing their work from throughout the school year.

Results

This inquiry resulted in a thorough and rich description of the learning and teaching activities, feelings, hopes, and relationships of the students, teachers, and student teachers. To illustrate these experiences in rich detail so the audience can vicariously share the experiences of the participants, several quotations from fieldnotes by the researcher and by the teachers and student teachers will be presented.

A Sample Day. The 60-70 students spend the entire day in this class every other day and then take traditional classes such as shop, advanced placement physics, and so on during four other periods on the alternate days. Thus, they are earning eight credits for the year, four of them in Unified. Students have to be juniors or seniors to take Unified and they have to submit a written

application to get in. The teachers select a wide variety of students ranging from those who are college-bound to some who normally enroll in remedial classes. They look for students who will complement one anothers' strengths and weaknesses. They want the students to see that there are other ways of thinking and doing life than the ones they and their usual friends are used to practicing.

No day is typical in Unified Studies. This sample of an actual day from the researcher's fieldnotes was selected to illustrate some of the in-school activities as well as one of the many outings the students take. A bus is scheduled approximately once per week for ski and hiking trips as well as visits to businesses, art displays, the State legislature, and many other educational sites.

Nov 8, 1989

8:01 AM I am sitting at the back of the classroom with the students listening to Camie and Kolbi whispering about a third student who is staying in a different house every night. They also talked about skiing and how scary it has been for them in the past. Angie (one of five teachers' aides for the class) is sitting up front taking roll. The tables are in three long rows across the room.

Tina told me that she and the other student teachers had their planning meeting last night and had a good time discussing how they were feeling about things. Wish I had been there! Tina said she took some notes though and would share those with me.

8:08 Sherrie comes to the front now saying they will need a pen or a pencil and a folder she is passing out to all of them.

Jerry and Lowell are talking about some cheat sheet notes Jerry has. I hear lots of visiting about events last night.

8:12 Sherrie: We are leaving for Salt Lake about 9:00; but until then we can get started on the Individual Book project. I am going to give you each a strip of tape. If you have extra, make sure it doesn't get left on the floor or anywhere. Don't write on it until I tell you. I want this done a certain way. Tina and Dorrie are helping. This is to tape up the [illegible] on the folders we are passing out.

8:16 While they prepare their file folders to hold the pages of their Individual Book, she comments on a topic many students seem concerned about because it is the last day of the term-- grades.

Sherrie: I am not going to follow you around and make sure you do what I say. I know they do that in other classes but we won't do it in here. Reading your research papers, I saw direct quotes from each other and that is totally mediocre. It is your choice if you want to do it that way; but if you really want to get something out of this class, you can't do that. In talking to some of you about what you have learned, I found that many learned they can not put off doing the assignments in here. Some of you turned in things over a week late and I just turned it back. Not that I don't like you but because if you are always working on something due in the past, you won't be working on what we are doing now. If you blew it in the past, put it all behind you and get on with the present. I would love to give all of you A's....

In the middle of her sentence, Carl called out wondering what the "guy-girl" chart on the front board is about? Not flustered at all, Sherrie turned and saw it and told him that it was to see if he knew the difference! This chart was used by a student teacher earlier for something Sherrie didn't

know about. But rather than get upset over the student's interruption, she went right back to explaining how they are assigning grades. She hates percentages and curves. Instead she assigns the best total score an "A" ; those who earn about half of that best score get a "C-" and so on. She uses the natural breaks between groups of scores to assign the grades in between.

Sherrie: If you want me to explain why I hate curves and percentages, challenge me.

So Carl spoke up and asked why. Jack asked if they were getting the same grade in all four subject areas. No, four different ones (one for each of the four graded subject areas that make up Unified Studies-- social studies, recreation, science, and English).

Sherrie explained that use of a grading curve divides people immediately into categories instead of giving them all a chance to earn an "A." She and Mike (the other teacher) don't give extra credit either. They feel that using set percentages of all points possible is crazy too because the breakdown is made before the class even begins. It doesn't take into account that the teacher is not infallible.

Sherrie: Grading that way assumes that teachers are perfect and write perfect tests. I know that isn't true. I had a lot of teachers who gave me tests that weren't any good or they didn't teach me well enough. Is that clear to you?

8:27 Sherrie: I want you to begin working now on your individual books. This could be the biggest challenge for you yet. She began explaining what information she wanted them to write on the folders.

Sherrie: This is worth about 1000 points for your English grades. So do not blow it. I have been impressed by the class book pages you have turned in. I am still waiting for some of you though and you will only get half credit because it is too late for full credit. Those who turned it in already have 250 points toward next term.

She began explaining the assignment in great detail, including measurements to follow in preparing the pages of the books to put in the folders.

A few people are just now coming in. Angie went around and passed out folders and tape to some of them. Some of them are writing what Sherrie is saying but others are just staring at her and don't appear to understand her.

Sherrie: Your book is going to be 20-30 pages long. You can't use any subject you want-- some subjects are not allowed. I don't want any satanic stuff. You will be typing your own books. I used to do it but it took a lot of time and I couldn't read your writing. It has to be typed unless you are a draftsman or can do fancy lettering. Make sure you have dark print. Have us check your spelling and punctuation first; there can be no mistakes. If you make mistakes, type or draw on another piece of paper and tape it over the mistaken one. Has to be all in ink and not in color or it won't print out really sharp. I am printing at least 30 copies of each book so you can trade with other people or give them as gifts. Make it worth doing-- first class. Are you in the back writing this down?

Sherrie asked Chuck to get a copy of some of the books created in previous years and she read some poetry from one.

I overheard one student whispering to another-- "that is so good!"

She read another of her favorites and showed them the art work and how the facing pages worked together so well. She went on to the rest of the instructions-- but I won't include them all here.

Sherrie: Regarding the topics you can write about, I want the theme to have something to do with what we do here in Unified. It doesn't have to cover all four subjects. In the 14 years we have done this, we have had people try to do humorous ones. That is the hardest-- maybe 5 have succeeded. So be careful about that. If you really want to do it, make it classy. If it was hard for you to do the class book page, get started now. Do not copy or plagiarize. Many of you got nailed for that on the research projects. When I get 5 research papers starting with the same sentence, you get nailed for that. The people in this room are your audience. They will get copies of your book. Okay?

There were no more questions, so Mike took over from Sherrie.

Mike: Today we are going to the ski factory. The people there are taking time away from their business to talk to you; so even if you are in the back and can't hear, be quiet. We are going to come back from this experience and design our own skis. You will submit your designs to the people who talk to you today. If they like your art work, they may buy your design from you and pay you to use it. You could make a lot of money if they choose your design.

Jack: Have they ever chosen any from the class before?

9:20 AM Sherrie: We have never done this before. We want them to invite us back and to find this was the best group they have ever had. Be scholars about this-- listen and learn what they have to teach you. This is your chance to learn from the inside how a small business is created and run. Keep your hands off of things. Okay-- let's get on the bus!

2:11 PM. We just got back from our trip to Salt Lake City. We rode first to Evolving Skis. They tailor-make skis of all sorts. On the way up I sat by Mike and we visited about the mountains we were passing and about the Winter Olympics bid Utah is making. He had a lot of ideas. The four student teachers spread throughout the bus to visit with students during the 45 minute ride.

We divided into three groups to go through the ski factory. Inside the factory there was only one mishap when a plastic shaping machine was turned on and began pushing a huge cart into a group of students. The tour guide hustled to save them and cut his hand in the process. The guides had lots of information about the process and about how this business was started. A few students asked questions but it was fairly noisy in there and not super easy to hear..

After the session there, we still had nearly 2 hours before we needed to head back, so we decided to go see the Vietnam memorial recently put up at the State Capital building. There was no one available to give us a tour but that was fine. Before the students got off the bus, Mike talked to them briefly about his experiences in 1968 of having an assigned draft number and visiting with his friends about what was going to happen to them if they got drafted. He spoke pointedly about the fact that some of his friends didn't come back from there. He didn't end up having to go. It was not a long speech but set the scene appropriately for the visit to the memorial. He asked the students not to go into the capital building and to stay close.

I was moved by the statue. Many students appeared to be moved as well. Several people stood around it for 30-40 minutes and talked quietly about what they were seeing and what this war had meant to their families and other people they knew. A fairly large group of students visited the memorial briefly and then played a nerf football game on the grass nearby.

On the bus home, Mike talked to me about ham radio operations. He is getting certified and believes that could come in handy with the outings he makes with Unified. He also said he had talked with some students at the memorial about how stupid it was to be involved with local

gangs. That has been a hot topic around the school lately. Several of the guys told him they felt that way about it too. Interesting what a teaching moment like this can lead to.

When we got back, people stood around and talked while waiting for the bell to ring or until they could talk to someone about their grades. I have not seen so much interest in grades yet this year. Dottie (a student teacher) told me she is excited about doing a good job with a lesson she is planning on archeology for Friday. She has really been struggling with what her teaching philosophy is. She came to Unified with some ideas about how she wanted to teach but has not felt those ideas were appropriate in this teaching setting. She has had two chances to really be in charge so far and both experiences had some positive aspects but overall they were not what she expected or wanted.

I can identify with what she is saying. I feel anxious when I think about teaching the Unified students in a traditional way. They just are not willing to go back to the lecture-text-test approaches they endure in their other classes. And to teach the way Mike and Sherrie do seems nearly impossible if you are teaching just a lesson or two-- you have to do it as part of a greater whole that extends over more time. It will be interesting to see what the student teachers do during the next while as they prepare and carry out some lessons together over a several week period. They seem ready to start doing that. It is good they have nine months to learn how to teach in this setting. So far, their teaching experiences have been individual instead of united. They need to take advantage of the holistic nature of this class instead of adapting what they would do in a traditional classroom setting to this non-traditional arrangement.

This example of a day was selected to illustrate the fact that although the students are earning credits in four distinct areas, their daily activities are not divided up into those categories but integrate those four and many other topic areas into holistic experiences. The first part of the day was focused on a creative project (the Class Book) in which students were assigned to use art and creative writing to invent a book for their peers on a topic related to some aspect of the content of the class. There was an aside during which Sherrie talked explicitly about grades but made the implicit point that I heard repeated many times throughout the year: the students are responsible for their own learning and the grading system is designed to give them all a chance to take that responsibility instead of blaming others for what they do. The outing included a trip to a business to see how people use their creative abilities to make a living and to hear about what it takes to make a small business succeed in America. Then the students were introduced to the complex issues associated with war and the responses of young people to the particularly troubling questions associated with the conflict in Vietnam. Not every day had that much variety and many days had even more.

A Ten Week Curriculum Plan. As the sample day narrative demonstrates, by holding class for the entire day every other day, a wide variety of activities and topics is possible in Unified Studies. A summary of the projects and activities for the first quarter of the 1990-91 school year elaborates that point somewhat, though it does not reveal the even wider diversity that the whole year includes.

August 30- Introduction to the class and melodrama by the principal to reinforce that the students can't take the opportunities of this class for granted; begin memorizing names; view and discuss the video "Discovering the Future: the business of paradigms"; introduce plant collection project; prepare for the first hike.

September 4- Take first hike up Scott's Hollow; gather plants for plant collections.

September 6- Begin plant identification; introduction to Celebrations and fieldnote journals; pre-test and introduction to hypothermia.

September 10- Discuss details for the Christmas Meadows overnight hike; detailed discussion of hypothermia; work on plants; begin water coloring; visit South Fork to identify "private domain" where students will visit throughout the year to observe, meditate, write, and water color.

September 12- Musical chairs botany; more work on identifying and preparing collected plants; training for the elementary education activities so students will be prepared to teach second to fourth graders without adult supervision; review and test on names of class members; writing in insight journals.

September 14- Christmas Meadows hike all day; many of the class goes up the night of 13th.

September 18- Plants; final test on names; introduction and initial work on drawing and writing poetry for the class book page (each student, teacher, and student teacher creates a page to include in a book that will be published for the whole class to keep).

September 20- First elementary education day (students go on buses with 300 children from nearby elementary schools and teach them various skills such as knot tying, art, plant and animal appreciation, etc. in the out of doors. The elementary school teachers will be there but will let the high school students run the entire activity).

September 24- Introduction to art criticism; Park City visit to view and critique various forms of art.

September 26- Journal writing; second elementary education day.

September 28- Training on how to create a slide show in preparation for taking slides all year for a final project to show to the class; third elementary education day.

October 2- Work on class book page; more plant identification; begin learning Esperanto, an international language invented to encourage world peace.

October 4- Bring art materials, lunch, and fieldnote journals for a solo experience (each student alone to think, water color, write,etc. for two hours) in the mountains.

October 8- Last day to work on class book page; more Esperanto; introduction to the research project; one-on-one exercise in which each student interviews another student.

October 10- Class book page is due; outing up Bridal Veil Falls tram for class picture (for yearbook); visit to the private domain to write and paint.

October 12- No class due to Utah Educators Association meetings. Do something great with your time!!

October 16- Visit Rock Canyon to learn bouldering techniques and to water color. Hear presentation there by botanist who is organizing activists to save the canyon from development planners; group art activity to summarize what was learned from the botanist.

October 18- Write opinion paper on the Rock Canyon issue; guest speaker to talk about nutrition, health and allergies; last plant identification day; another one-on-one exercise; introduction to the social studies projects to be done in groups on various "hot" issues.

October 22- Work on social studies projects; Esperanto; flytying; plant collections are due.

October 24- All day trip to go rock hounding for geology study; bring a lunch.

October 26- Work on social studies projects; session on health and making health contracts proposing things you will do to improve your health habits.

October 30- Follow-up on health contracts; introduction and begin work on individual books (a project for each student to create their own book with illustrations and prose or poetry which will be copied and bound for distribution to all other students); Social studies project presentations.

November 1- Grade evaluations (Each student self-evaluates on the assignments they had for the quarter. These will be compared to the teachers' evaluations and discrepancies will be discussed individually in preparation for final grade assignment); outdoor cooking in groups in the West desert (each assigned group decides what they are going to cook together and who will bring what).

The grade evaluation form completed on the last day of the quarter captures the scope of the work done as well as the relative value the teachers assigned through the number of points they designated for each assignment:

Name _____
Directions: Good morning! It is that special time of year again when we take a look at what we have done for the term and evaluate our progress. You will be glad to know that you have a significant role to play in that process. We would like you to evaluate what quality you produced on each of the projects listed below. At the end of the evaluation, please give yourself a grade in each of the four areas listed and tell <u>why</u> you feel you deserve that over-all grade. Be sure to take into account attendance and tardies since we must do that also.

Science:

Plant preparation (20)	_____
Plant preparation (20)	_____
Plant pre-test (50)	_____
Hypothermia final (50)	_____
Individual plant final (93)	_____
Plant collection (500)	_____
Diet Chart (25)	_____
Fat thermostat paper (25)	_____
Health contract (20)	_____
Rock hounding (200)	_____
Botanist speaker (20)	_____
Nutritionist speaker (50)	_____

English:

Names test (125) _____
Journal preparation (10) _____
Names test final (135) _____
Journal entry No. 1 -- Scotts Hollow (20) _____
Journal entry No. 2 -- Domain No. 1 (20) _____
Journal entry No. 3 -- Christmas Meadows (20) _____
Journal entry No. 4 -- Personal Insight (20) _____
Journal entry No. 5 -- Personal Celebration (20) _____
Journal entry No. 6 -- Park City (20) _____
Journal entry No. 7 -- Elementary Education (20) _____
Journal entry No. 8 -- Domain No. 2 (20) _____
Response to the "Bag of Possibles" article (50) _____
Meditation (15) _____
Two Haiku and Two Diamante Poems (50) _____
Solo (50) _____
Perfect Day description (20) _____
Classbook Page (150) _____

Social Studies:

Personal Survey (20) _____
Park City (50) _____
Esperanto No.1 (50) _____
Esperanto No.2 (50) _____
Issue presentation (150) _____

Recreation (PE and art):

Water color No. 1 (25) _____
Art critique (25) _____
Slide show (25) _____
Park City (50) _____
Solo (25) _____
Classbook Page (100) _____
Scotts Hollow (200) _____
Christmas Meadows hike (300) _____
Bouldering (100) _____
Rock Hounding (50) _____
Outdoor Cooking (100) _____

Other:
Absences _____
Tardies _____
Your attitude _____
Comments/Suggestions:

Final grades for the quarter:

English _____ Science _____
Why? Why?
Social Studies _____ Recreation _____
Why? Why?

A Teacher's Point of View. Two excerpts from one of the teacher's fieldnote journal illustrate some of the thinking and creating that go into the Unified Studies experience. Sherrie helped invent this class in 1974-75 with another teacher who died just a few years later. She collaborated with others for 2-3 years and has been working for eight years now with Mike. As these excerpts indicate, she is constantly searching for ways to improve the class; but she does it in a way that is revitalizing to her too. She looks for learning experiences in the natural world that are interesting to her and searches for ways to help the students experience the joy of learning with her with as little artificiality as possible.

The first excerpt is taken from notes written during a solo experience in which everyone in the class spread out on a mountain side and spent an hour or two alone with water coloring and writing materials. The second excerpt was written during a field trip to study rocks.

SOLO Oct. 4, 1990

I am always concerned about this day because I am not in contact with each student all of the time. I want them to be able to feel this day into their souls so that years from now a part of them will remember and still feel the peace that was part of this day. One of the major keys to long term learning is the emotional involvement of the learner. If assignments don't require them to tie into their emotional reactions to the information, they will forget it. Unified is a learning experience they will remember not only for 5 or 10 years but maybe for the rest of their lives. Maybe not every day in Unified does that but they have experiences that provide them with reference points that determine values, create better citizens and better life styles, and make people's lives and communities better.

I talked to them in class about how valuable trust can be and exactly what our expectations of their behavior should be. I am excited right now. I don't know if they're all asleep or if they are really doing what they are supposed to do; but I cannot hear them. I walked around and took pictures for an hour, and it was so impressive to be in this place with these people and know that many of them were responding to the total experience. I do love capturing moments of beauty-- I am anxious to create a slide show.

One of the best parts of this day was a short conversation with Dave [the researcher who is also working with the student teachers]. Somehow there has been a "spirit-melt" between the three of us. I can't believe or understand exactly how this has happened, but we are so one in philosophy and understanding so much of the time it's exhilarating. Mike and I have been this way for a long time, but to have someone come in and become part of that is really unusual. I've decided that I cannot call what I do work -- it's living.

Anyway, I tried to explain this to Dave in 15 words or less, and I don't think I succeeded very well, but I could feel the emotion he was feeling about being with these kids and in this place and what a difference it can make in a person's life. It changes your perspective about what you are doing and it creates clarity of values. It frustrates me that these relationships are so time limited. That was and is the greatest sadness I experience every year with the students. It almost makes me hesitate to move too close. Of course, I have obviously made a choice, but it is still difficult for me. I work with such great people in such outstanding circumstances I wish I could rise to their level as a teacher. Inadequacy is a real pain.

Rock Hounding Oct. 24, 1990

This has been a glorious day again. It always amazes me how much there is to be gained when we leave the "normal" classroom behind and come to reality. I know that I talk about it, but it still hits me every now and then.

Norm and Darla (student teachers) just came up and said they thought it would be fun for his birthday to bring cupcakes for the class, have show and tell and have everyone take a nap! I suggested that we have everyone bring blankets and pillows; read to them from Fulgham (Robert Fulgham, who wrote All I Ever Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten), have every person bring some object that they are proud of or that represents something that is an important part of their person, and explain why. We could play some Yoga music and have the students literally take a nap. What a novel idea -- plan a day just for the joy of being so that the students walk away feeling better than they did when they came. Now where's the education in that?)

Back to this day -- we got away from the school at 8:15 a.m. It is so difficult to leave right on time. I think that that is our fault, but it's difficult to think of leaving so many people behind and there are always some who are late.

It took us 2 and 1/2 hours to get out to the topaz beds. I see beauty in the desert and in the starkness that surrounds this area. There seems to be nothing for miles except sage brush with mountains circling it. When we got into it and started walking around, there was so much more to it. The formations and lava flows and the topaz and the black garnets were wonderful to discover. When the bus finally stopped, I'm sure that the students felt the same way I did -- relief.

I knew that Joni (a student teacher) was going to give the students their assignment, so I took a few minutes with them first to set the stage for the type of learning we were going to be providing for them today. How can I get them to realize what they are having an opportunity to do while they are having it? The best way to get students to learn is to devise essential questions and work from them; this is how we do life, except school. From the time we were born we have been filling up card catalogs full of things we have been learning because we asked the questions as they came to us and then solved problems and found answers. Why isn't school designed this way more? It will be interesting to see what the students come up with; they may need to be trained in how to ask questions that structure learning activities. It would require them to personalize their education.

Joni arranged for a student from the university who is getting his masters degree in geology to come with us to show us where the beds of topaz are. He was very good with the students. When we got off the bus, Mike and I and several of the students went up a wash that produced no topaz. We were discouraged and I was very concerned that none of the students would find anything. Not to worry. The ones who had gone in the opposite direction were very successful. So when we got back to the bus and were supposed to leave, I couldn't stand it. I had to go to the beds that they had found. Pretty soon everyone was back off the bus and looking for topaz. Ned found a large one and Sally and Ruth were going crazy. I called them gem-dogs. They just had a nose for finding where they were. Anyway, we all found some good samples before we left for the garnet beds. It's interesting to me that Mike and I are the last ones to pull ourselves onto the bus and away from something like this. We decided to bring our families out here on a Saturday or Sunday. Most of the students were involved and willing to look, but a few can't seem to handle something if it requires more than a marginal effort. They passed the time sitting on a rock yodeling back and forth across the canyon. It must be true that it takes all kinds. We've got them in here and I wouldn't have it any other way. I need about 20 lifetimes to begin to learn all about the things I want to learn. I hope someone can arrange that.

I spent some time with Sissy. She has come out here with her family, so she knows what she is looking for. She is so bright and intelligent. I think she saw a different side of me also. It was good to laugh and look and share discoveries. This is so much more valuable than a new set of textbooks. What would they tell me about Sissy?

On the way home Mike and I talked and asked Andy (the graduate student in geology) questions. Mike was right next to him and he really picked his brain. He is just like me, always wanting to learn something else. People are so great to be willing to come and be with this class and not receive any pay for it -- just a big thank you.

Last night I went to part of a department meeting to watch a video of a speaker on education. His philosophy was great. He talked about how education has gone in some of the wrong directions as far as reaching students and providing what they really need. He said that our schools should be set up in such a way that they are where students will want to be because school provides them with such a good feeling about themselves. What a novel idea! He said that the "I can" idea needed to be emphasized rather than spending so much time finding out what students cannot do or rather what they are not masters of yet. He refuses to accept the idea that some students are not capable of learning and he hates the terms "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well." Well according to whom? Doesn't this imply that if you can't already do it well, don't do it? No wonder, we think we can't sing, can't dance, can't do sports. (I'm going to go to the dance class with Sherrie next week. I have really missed it. I can't believe I'm not even hesitating. I really never think of myself as not being able to do something because of my age or ability, and I really don't seem to care too much what someone else thinks. Anyway, it's street dancing).

I'm going to go wrap up two deer tonight that we got last weekend. That was quite an experience. We left on Friday so that we wouldn't have to set up camp in the dark. It seems that I am always doing that. However, because of the rain storm we got across the state, we got there in the dark, and it was pouring rain. It's great. No one else knows how to set up the tent but me, and the others weren't even going to set up a tent. I had to set up two, and then off course, no one else brought any food but junk food for the night. I cooked all our stew for everyone else and gave them hot chocolate. The training I've received in Unified Studies has really paid off. That little whisper light stove works so well and especially with everyone and everything wet. I knew from working with students in weather intimidating circumstances that everyone needed something warm. It seemed to work. Spirits rose.

It is so exciting to have such a difficult time doing something and to succeed. I think that the point of life is not to have it easy and die, but to succeed at the difficult and live. I wonder why the edge is always so much more appealing to me than the sure safety. What has made me this way and why do I constantly seek the edge in my life? What makes me think and believe and even know that I can survive at the edge? I know that someone telling me that I can't do something is a sure way to get me to do it. I do not like imposed limitations from any source. More and more I am demanding the freedom and the right to establish not limitations but personal incentives and goals. I liked the idea that Paul expressed when he told the students to be producers rather than consumers. I think I am extending the metaphor to a larger range than he intended, but I know that I am a passionate consumer of what is around me. I am probably intimidating to some because of it. I would like to transform what I consume into production of life and lifestyle. I hope that becoming the best teacher I can possibly be is as much of a production as writing the perfect poem, painting the Mona Lisa, building a business empire. It is not as showy, and I know that if I directed all the energy I am putting into that aspect of my life into something else, I would succeed. However, I believe in its importance and value for myself and for others.

The weather today was the best. The company couldn't have been better, and the environment was stimulating. I think I'll keep on living.

<u>A Student Teacher's Point of View.</u> During the two years of this study, 13 different student teachers have joined Mike and Sherrie in Unified Studies. Many others have participated over the years, of course. In fact, Mike was a student teacher there over 10 years ago. But during these two years, 9 of the student teachers participated in a special program which involved them there for the entire nine months of the school year. This is how the teachers prefer student teacher involvement because they don't believe anyone can really catch the vision of what they are doing in the program in

less time than that. As Mike has said, "Some of the students don't catch on to what we are doing until the end of the year or even later. And if student teachers are here only until Christmas, they never see some of the most dramatic changes." It often takes the student teachers that long too to realize that holistic education is not as simple as what they were brought up on as education! During these two years, most of the student teachers have kept fieldnotes which document their attitudes and their growing desire to teach school in the Unified or holistic way. Quotes from some of these notes illustrate.

I love this class. First relaxation exercises and then aerobics today--in what other class would we relax for a block, then kick it out with some cardiovascular exercise for another block. This class is great at helping us discover possibilities for passions. Of course, the gamut of passions we discover in Unified Studies is biased by Mike and Sherrie (for instance, we haven't learned to skate board yet and we haven't studied Oingo Boingo, either), but fortunately, the two of them are open for new ideas and suggestions. I think this open mindedness comes from a history of successes. I've learned that most people are afraid of new things because they are afraid of failure. Mike and Sherrie are both very successful people, perhaps not in areas where the world cites success, but in life.

My idea of what learning is has been strengthened by being involved with Unified Studies. I have learned that grades aren't really important, one can learn without worksheets, and the world is full of limitless things to learn. I personally feel more excitement about learning now. I'm excited to explore things I would have never dreamed of exploring before. I feel like I learned almost every day in Unified. Real teaching is providing opportunities for learners to learn. I don't think teachers should only present information the students know they like learning. I think it is good for students to be challenged as well as exposed to things they might not initially like. Teachers should be learners as well. Mike and Sherrie are great at this I think. They were more than willing to try my ideas even though they had never been tried before. They were willing to participate in all and to learn themselves.

In answer to the question, "How does Unified teach?", Suzanne, an intelligent, college bound blonde who spent three months on her own in Europe, said "By going out and doing things like elementary education, skiing, hiking, etc. It's just the same way you learn lessons in life--through experience, then trying to improve each time." Unified Studies exposes students to many of life's lessons in an outdoor setting. Mountains teach people that they can do much more than they ever expected because success is the only viable alternative. When things get tough in the classroom and the frustration levels rise, students can quit. So they get an F--who cares? They have received F's before. "I can't do any better" is a common attitude. One day in class when we were supposed to be studying mammal facts in order to play a trivia game I noticed that Hank was not doing anything. When I asked him about it he said, "I can't learn that stuff. I'm in resource." The material was not difficult but as easy as it was to learn, giving up was easier.

Giving up on a mountain trail is not easy. The bus drops us off on one side of the pass and drives around to wait on the other Mikee. When the trail gets tough and frustration levels start to rise, quitting is the least favorable alternative. Returning to the bus is not an option because it is gone. Refusing to go on really is not an alternative because somehow, someday the participant still has to get off the mountain, beMikees, what would friends think? Death is possible but that does not seem very appealing. And so they go on, step by step, until they reach the top and realize they

have done something they never dreamed possible. Nataline, a petite, delicate blonde, said "They teach us not to be afraid to try new things. The hikes, ski trips, etc. aren't easy. There's no turning back, no quitting."

Sherrie tells the story of an overweight, slightly slow student that started the Windy Pass hike. About two miles in, before the trail had started to ascend, he sat down and defiantly pronounced his intention to go no farther. For the next several miles, in Sherrie's words, "I tried everything to get him up that mountain. I coaxed him. I cajoled him. I threatened, I yelled, everything. Finally I told him that I couldn't wait for him anymore, that I would meet him at the top, and I left. Of course I didn't completely leave him but he didn't know that. I'd hike ahead, wait by the side until I saw him coming, and then I'd continue. Once I sat concealed on the trail's edge and watched him as he passed. He was mumbling something and..." Sherrie smiles and her eyes get a bit misty at this point, "when I made out his words I learned a lesson. He was saying `I think I can, I think I can, I think I can...'". He could and he did. Quoting Sherrie again, "Hopefully they'll remember that [that they accomplished something of which they did not dream they were capable] and will transfer it to other aspects of their lives."

Unified student involvement in learning is not limited to participation in outdoor escapades; they are active in the classroom as well. Consider World Appreciation Day. The students served not only as participants, they were also managers, directors, coordinators, and producers. Just before a visit to the state capitol Unified students participated in an in-class mock legislature. In the session a student, elected as Speaker of the House, directed debate between student representatives about student generated bills. On Elementary Education day Unified students supervised 200 first and second graders. Regular teachers stepped aMikee while Unified participants taught a series of science related workshops, coordinated rotations between workshops, and directed lunch and playtime activities. Imagine, if you will, working with 200 six year olds and it is easy to see that Elementary Education Day is a participatory educational experience.

Some Students' Points of View. Many informal and formal interviews were conducted with students by the researcher and by the student teachers throughout both years of this study. Questionnaires were also administered and students were asked to comment on their experiences with Unified Studies. Former students returned regularly to the class and their comments were recorded in the fieldnotes. The following citations from these notes confirm that holistic education in Unified Studies is not always pleasant for students but it usually makes a real difference to them in the long run.

Unified helped me learn more about myself and what I can do. I've learned exactly what I am worth. I've learned to respect myself and others more.

I was very frustrated at the beginning of the year; I wasn't used to the kind of people that were in this class. I've always been an AP student and in AP classes. This class was so different from what I was used to. I considered transferring out and taking college bound classes but about the middle of the year I came to the conclusion that maybe the purpose of this class for me was to learn tolerance of others. I enjoy this class so much now. I can say so many wonderful things about each person. They are truly my friends.

At the beginning of the year, I was discouraged about this class. I felt I wasn't learning enough and that it was only for dropouts. About the middle of the year I realized how much I was really learning about myself and other people. I loved coming and getting to know everyone.

Through the whole year, I have learned more than I ever had in my whole life in school. Because you learn by experiencing it. It was great; I will never forget it.

Around the middle of the year it got kind of hard for me. A lot of things got in the way and I wish I'd of never let them. But they did. Even though I was having a hard time in Unified, the people and the teachers helped me alot. It also kept me in school.

I learned that anything is possible. I can't believe some of the things I have accomplished [this year].

I learned this year that we can make a difference, even though we are young.

Particular situations in life may have lots of different sides. Outlooks change from person to person.

I learned to work with others in all situations. Everybody is different and you have to handle them in different ways on different days and in different situations.

A graduate of nearly ten years showed up one day in a police car and talked for few minutes in the parking lot to Mike and Sherrie. They were surprised to see him in the uniform and laughed about how they didn't think he got anything out of the class the year he graduated. He replied with a serious face that after going through a lot of hard experiences since leaving high school, he has realized that the Unified Studies experience is the reason he is on this side of the badge and not behind bars. He didn't realize that at the time though.

This class has taught me how to think and look at things my own way. I teach myself. I learn by myself.

Some days I am really into it and some days I am not. But I definitely have learned a lot this year, more than any other year.

In Unified, you find that you are in control and that you can do anything you set your mind to. We're also outside seeing geography, plants, animals, etc. You're not just reading about it, you're experiencing it, hearing, feeling, seeing, smelling, and sometimes tasting. We use our senses. Make sense?

The teachers this year in Unified have taught me many parts of life. Not just the intellectual but the emotional, social, and physical. You couldn't get that in a regular school class.

Conclusions

Based on the results presented in these descriptive portrayals, several tentative conclusions may be reached. A few of these are summarized as follows:

1. Unified Studies is a living example of holistic education that has effectively developed and served students for many years.

2. Students who have participated actively in the program (which is the majority of those who are admitted) have clarified and internalized important values, discovered and established priorities for

how they want to live their lives, and overcome fears and anxieties normally encountered when one attempts the new or the unknown physically, mentally, or emotionally. They have also developed self-confidence and self-assurance as they have learned to understand and deal with real experiences in nature and to solve problems in groups.

3. The program's focus on "real experiences" instead of contrived "make-believe" education and "school materials [that] are often too simplified to permit the basic problem-solving process necessary for real learning to take place" accounts for much of what expands the students' learning beyond the narrow "transmission position" (Miller, 1988) or mechanistic approach to education that focuses on cognitive learning to the exclusion of the aesthetic, moral, physical, and spiritual needs of people. As they learned to wind surf on the second day of class, they showed their peers that they had room to grow and saw too that they were not alone. From there, they continued to share experiences with the other students and teachers from developing games as groups to hiking difficult mountain trails to writing research papers to preparing for job interviews to teaching elementary school children. They did not use textbooks nor take many paper and pencil tests; instead they completed projects that required them to use the library and reference materials in the school, to search for human resources, and to demonstrate what they had learned publicly in paintings, writing, presentations, and performance.

4. The teachers have been successful and continue to expand this program because they are holistic learners themselves. They are constantly searching for "real" and new experiences for themselves; and when they find these, they invite the students to join them in the adventure. These experiences have ranged from visiting the state legislature and writing letters to promote environmental issues to learning how to hang-glide to writing new forms of poetry to learning how to conduct naturalistic inquiry.

It is difficult to summarize what has been learned through this process because it is so comprehensive. Obviously, this presentation is not be a total summary either. Nor should it be because this program is not static. It is continually growing and changing with the people involved. But one can conclude that this kind of program is good for people and it should be presented to more educators. The principles involved address the needs of education today and sharing the lived experiences of the participants of Unified Studies may make a difference in the practices of other educators who are investigating the notion of holistic education.

Educational Importance

From time to time, educators have argued that the curriculum of American schools has become fractionated into disparate and unrelated "subject areas" or disciplines. Recently, Theodore Sizer reiterated this point in a lecture to members of a public school - university partnership. His presentation was summarized by Webb (1989) in these terms-- "Secondary schools should be more like elementary schools relative to curriculum structure, rather than featuring seven or eight disconnected subjects. Integration of curriculum is crucial. Were we to follow a student around for a day, attending every class all period long, we would begin to sense the unforgivable fragmentation of secondary schooling. Consequently, university students preparing to teach should become more broadly educated, rather than more specialized. Multiple subject teaching, in the form of genuine team teaching, is recommended for secondary schools."

Unified Studies is a program that has embodied this shift for 15 years. This presentation explores the day-to-day nature of that program and identifies some of the dimensions of the people involved in that program that make holistic education a realistic possibility in today's public schools. A rich understanding of their experiences should be invaluable to anyone interested in promoting such approaches elsewhere.

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